

## Historical Papers Communications historiques



### Obituaries/Nécrologie

Volume 24, numéro 1, 1989

Québec 1989

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/031006ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/031006ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

#### Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

#### ISSN

0068-8878 (imprimé)

1712-9109 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

#### Citer ce document

(1989). Obituaries/Nécrologie. *Historical Papers / Communications historiques*, 24(1), 236–239. <https://doi.org/10.7202/031006ar>

## Obituaries/*Nécrologie*

### CHARLES PERRY STACEY

Charles Perry Stacey, Canada's most prolific and distinguished military historian, died on 17 November 1989. The first person to record in detail Canada's role in the Second World War, his publications cover a wide range of Canadian history, and set exceptional standards for reliability and style.

Born in 1906, Colonel Stacey was a product of old Ontario, the son of a general practitioner in Toronto. He studied at the universities of Toronto, Oxford, and Princeton, where he received his doctorate in 1933. He taught at Princeton from 1933 to 1940. "Paradoxically," he wrote in his memoir *A Date with History*, "it was this American involvement that first gave me a serious interest in the history of Canada, which until then had no special appeal for me."

His doctoral thesis became his book, published in 1938, *Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871: A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government*. His thesis supervisor was Robert G. Albion, a great American maritime and naval historian. What that learned scholar remembered most about Charles Stacey was an extraordinary attachment to the British connection. That was to be expected; until well after the Second World War the British connection was much more important to Canadians than it is today. Stacey's lectures at the University of Western Ontario in 1976, on *Mackenzie King and the Atlantic Triangle*, however, showed a certain sensitivity to Canadian-American relations as well.

[On a visit to England in 1927] the conversation got on to the United States, and as almost always it became rather intemperate. . . . To my utter amazement, I found myself defending the Americans. (I realise now I was having my humble go at being a linch-pin). My effort was not very successful, for an English lady terminated that portion of the conversation by saying forcibly, "Oh, they're horrible people; let's not talk about them."

As this anecdote suggests, Charles Stacey was a realist. It exasperated him when influential writers made loose statements about the border between Canada and the United States being the longest undefended border in the world, and one of the learned papers for which he is best known in the historical fraternity is "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier," published in the *American Historical Review* in 1950.

He always knew, he said, that he would end up in the army. The annual garrison church parade in Toronto, which used to be a very colourful affair, introduced him to the idea, and at university he joined the COTC. While still a graduate student he began to publish scholarly papers at a rate that few well-established historians, let alone graduate students, could hope to match. He turned increasingly to military subjects, and was the 1930 winner of the *Canadian Defence Quarterly* competition. Between 1938 and 1940 he published, in several influential journals, eight articles on current defence policy, and in 1940 he brought out a book on the subject, *The Military Problems of Canada: A Survey of Defence Policies and Strategic Conditions Past and Present*.

When war broke out he expected, in view of his militia experience, to serve as a signals officer. General H.D.G. Crerar, however, had him appointed historian to the Canadian army overseas in 1940. Stacey then gathered a talented team of historians and war artists, and established the methods by which Canadian official history has been compiled ever since.

After the war Stacey saved the Army Historical Section from the cutbacks suffered by the naval and air force sections, and wrote three of the army histories himself: *The Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (1948); *Six Years of War* (1955); and *The Victory Campaign* (1960). While director of the Army Historical Section, he was president of the Canadian Historical Association in 1952-53 and honorary secretary of the Royal Society of Canada between 1957 and 1959, besides occasionally keeping his hand in at university teaching (he stood in for Professor R.G. Trotter at Queens in 1948). Donald Creighton observed, in a contribution to the *Festschrift* written in Stacey's honour in 1972, that this "indefatigable reviewer. . . was able to judge and evaluate the war histories and memoirs which flooded the book market in the early post-war years with an expertise which no other Canadian could have equalled."

He returned to university teaching when he retired from the army in 1959, but accepted the call to establish an integrated Directorate of History in 1965. As director from 1965 to 1966 he began writing *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (1970). He thought unification of the armed forces a mistake, but thanks to his efforts the directorate, with direct responsibility to the chief of defence staff, has been able to accomplish work that had proved impossible until that time.

His literary output was consistently large and of outstanding quality. *The Canadian Army, 1939-1945* won a Governor-General's award. *Arms, Men and Governments* won the Albert Corey Prize in Canadian-American relations. In 1955 the Royal Society of Canada recognized Stacey with the Tyrrell Medal. His reputation was widespread: the British military historian John Keegan, in a letter to the present writer, gave it as his opinion that the official histories of the Canadian army were the best he had consulted.

After returning to civilian life Stacey produced a series of elegantly written books, the first of which was *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (1959). This earned him universal praise, unlike his controversial *A Very Double Life* (1976), a biographical study of W.L. Mackenzie King that gave particular attention to King's spiritualism and sexual adventures. Many historians challenged Stacey's use of evidence in this work, but they failed to dismay him. "I decline to be ashamed of it," he wrote, ". . . and I think its status will improve with time."

A man of high moral principle, Charles Stacey nevertheless had a mischievous wit. As a lecturer he could sometimes pass for a stand-up comic. As an editor and critic he could be devastating, but historians usually welcome tough criticism. As a teacher he encouraged countless students, and he trained a small army of military historians. For years the historical section of the General Staff and the Directorate of History were the only postgraduate schools of military history in Canada. In 1981 he completed a two-volume history of Canadian external affairs between 1867 and 1948, which he called

*Canada in the Age of Conflict*. This in some ways was the fruit of all his labours, and reflected his greatest enthusiasms, history and military affairs. In pursuing those avocations, both as soldier and historian, he served his country well. He will not be forgotten.

As a footnote to this obituary, the Directorate of History has obtained approval to name the building in which it is located, at 2429 Holly Lane, Ottawa, The Colonel Charles P. Stacey Building.

**W.A.B. Douglas**  
**Director, Directorate**  
**of History**

\* \* \* \* \*

## **JAMES A. TAGUE**

James A. Tague departed this life on 8 June 1989 after losing a struggle with cancer. For those who knew him and had worked with him since the 1960s, his death was a decisive, if unexpected, shock. A graduate of Case-Western Reserve University, Jim was head of the Department of History at Memorial University between 1976 and 1982. Previous to this, he had acted as a coordinator of the introductory course in the department and presided over the faculty association. In this latter role, he applied his formidable administrative talents to the fundamentals of its organization.

All of this leads to an important consideration. Jim Tague was no standard academic. From time to time, he was prepared to assert that he was not really an academic at all. None the less, even if he took up the discipline in a fit of absent-mindedness, he was a great defender of academe and its importance both in his teaching and in his insightful comments on historical subjects. Clearly this was his motivation in taking positions of leadership in defence of the rights of faculty members. Moreover, he dedicated his efforts to the position of special groups of students, such as those studying part time.

This latter was one way in which, as an individual, James A. Tague seemed to project the archetypical New Englander, as became one who was born in that part of the world. There was about him a bluntness and openness, a desire to get to the bottom of things in order to see the world as it is. While this did not make him popular, it was the source of the great respect which his friends felt for him and for his opinions. With his passing, our institution and our society become the poorer.

**Gerald Panting**  
**Memorial University**  
**of Newfoundland**

**HUGH N. WALLACE 1920-1989**

Hugh Wallace died suddenly on 19 October 1989. He had been a member of the Mount Saint Vincent University faculty from 1969 until his retirement in 1986.

Hugh was born and raised in Calgary. After receiving his BA in History from the University of Alberta, he worked for a number of years at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board. He returned to university for graduate study in the mid-1950s, first at Toronto for an MA in Political Science, then at Rochester for an MA in History, and finally at King's College, University of London, where he completed his PhD in 1975. He began his teaching career at the University of Windsor in 1968.

During his years at Mount Saint Vincent, Hugh taught a wide variety of course in the History department and served two terms as departmental chair. His field was Canadian history, and he took a special interest in the Britannic origins of Canadian culture and politics, in Canada's evolving relationship with the United States, in the historic relations of English and French history, and he took a special interest in the Britannic origins of Canadian culture and politics, in Canada's evolving relationship with the United States, in the historic relations of English and French Canadians and, above all, in the history of the Canadian North. His book, *The Navy, the Company and Richard King: British Exploration in the Canadian Arctic, 1829-1860*, received uniformly high praise when it was published in 1980 and has become something of a classic in its field.

Hugh was, however, no narrow academic specialist. His interests and his knowledge ranged widely over the history of Western culture and beyond. He sought an integrated understanding of past and present. This quest was especially apparent, toward the end of his teaching career, in the seminar he offered on the thought of Harold Adams Innis, and in the project which lay uncompleted at the time of his death, his response to George Grant's *Lament for a Nation*. This last, which he always referred to as his "letter" to Grant, amounted, in fact, to an extended and intricate statement of his own philosophy of history. His final work, which will be published posthumously, was an essay entitled "The 'Filioque' Clause: An Anglican View of Double Procession."

Hugh combined a broad intellectual outlook with personal warmth and a wry sense of humour. He will be remembered by friends and colleagues with respect and humour.

**Kenneth C. Dewar  
Mount Saint Vincent  
University**